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5-2020

## Reluctant to See the Sun Go Down

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### Recommended Citation

Rogoff, Marianne, "Reluctant to See the Sun Go Down" (2020). *Literature and Languages | Faculty Scholarship*. 10.  
<https://scholar.dominican.edu/literature-languages-faculty-scholarship/10>

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## Reluctant to See the Sun Go Down

I am reading a novel on Stinson Beach, written by a guy I knew in graduate school, a poet who has won many awards, married to a more famous poet who died recently. The book is small, which is why I checked it out of the library to bring to the beach, and it reads like a poet wrote it, less like a novel, more like poems with characters and a plot. Even though the author has switched genders and the grieving person in the book is female while the dead one is male, I can feel that this is how the author is managing his grief, giving it words in a new form that is not his usual approach.

And I remember when he and I made love in my San Francisco studio a long time ago, before we married other people. We were young, him almost reluctant, me showing my usual inquisitive desire as I touched the deep, wide (maybe three-inch) indent below his skull and neck bones, at the top of his spine, and asked (tenderly), “What’s this?” and he said, “Cancer, it’s where they cut out the cancer.”

Now he is the one still alive while his poet wife died first and I’m remembering that I never saw him again, or, I saw him around but we did not go on to have what you would call a relationship. It was just that one night: tender, a little reluctant, at moments sad yet also generous, fulfilling, not forgotten; I, at least, hold onto it as a meaningful connection, even if it was just that once. I carry that night like a small treasure that I fondle from time to time, like my feelings for all lovers who were there then gone, like these perfect, flower-carved sand dollars I found on my walk today, and the wave-softened blue glass shards, iridescent abalone shell, and the sand between my toes that I will later wash off to put on my shoes.

I sit cross-legged reading on a tropical-print beach towel with my little pile of found objects, the town where I lived with my now-ex-husband a splendid silhouette against the sky in

the distance, late afternoon July sunlight, and I think tenderly of him, too, but that love was YEARS and COMPLEX, its unraveling a hard challenge.

Here, today, the scene is nothing but innocent: girls turning cartwheels; a surfer wrapping a towel around his waist to take off his wetsuit and put on dry shorts in a modest way, in wind that keeps grabbing the towel away; a couple standing at the edge of the waves, arms around each other's waists, not knowing what's ahead; loud waves.

What a miracle that we do not fall off the edge of the spinning globe.